

RUSTIC HOSPITALITY.

A SKETCH.

BY E. L. C.

[WITH AN ENGRAVING.]

He had returned, that weary, way-worn man,
After long years of wandering, to the land
That gave him birth.

Stricken in heart, and sad,
He had gone forth upon that fatal morn,
Which saw another wed his plighted bride.
Without one parting word, one look, he went—
Crossed the broad seas, and in a soldier's life,
Strove to forget the hopes, on whose fair buds,
A wintry blight had fallen.

He strove in vain;
For ever 'mid the tumult of the camp,
Walked by his side the sweet and gentle form
Of her he loved—and in the thickening strife,
Her fondly sheltering arms seemed over him spread,
To ward the death-blow from his dauntless breast.
So years rolled on—years filled with toil and change,
With outward change, for none was wrought within.
Still, still his heart, true to its early dream,
Throbbed faithful on; and still with memory's eye
Undimmed by time, he saw his Lucy's face,
Tearful, and sweet, as he beheld it last,
At her own cottage door—his heart, e'en then,
O'er-fraught with secret fear, yet little dreaming,
As thus he paused to catch her parting smile,
Ere through the silent glen he wound his way,
That he its tender light no more should feel,
Falling like heaven's own sunshine on his soul,
To cheer and bless.

But true, alas! his fears;—
For she, obedient to her father's will,
Gave to another her unwilling hand,
Leaving the chosen of her virgin heart,
Forsaken and betrayed. Then from his home
In search of peace he fled, but found it not—
Nor could forego the love, which of his being
Had become a part; for, his brief anger o'er,
Her hapless fate he wept, more than his own,
And so, again, fair love her light re-kindled,
Within the broken flame of his fond heart,
And memories sweet fed the pure vestal flame
With fragrant oil, that kept it ever bright.

Amid the past, entranced his spirit dwelt,
Haunted the sylvan dell, or musing sat,
In the green forest glade, 'mid whispering leaves
And songs of happy birds, and murmuring breathed
His oft repeated tale of love and faith
In Lucy's listening ear.

And with these dreams,
Came yearnings deep and strong to tread once more
Those dear familiar paths; to lave his brow,
With manhood's signet stamped, in the clear stream,
Where oft in boyish sport, his youthful limbs
Had wrestled with the wave—to climb the hills,
Whose verdant heights bounded his childhood's world,
And from the rose-tree by his mother's door,
Pluck the bright flowers, which oft in happier days,
His hand had culled, to deck his Lucy's hair,
Or shed their fragrance on her snowy breast—
He, as they faded there, envying their fate,
So sweet a death to die.

Filled with such thoughts,
He homeward turned his steps—his sword exchanged
For pilgrim staff, he gained his own dear land,
And wandered on a solitary man,
Through many a fair and well remembered scene,
To the green vale, within whose verdant bounds
Were centred once his joys, ambition, hopes.
But, lone and sad, he stood a stranger there,
Where erst he dwelt, circled by loving hearts;
All lay around him, bright, unchanged, and fair,
Rocks, trees, and gushing streams, smiling in beauty,
And each quiet cot, with its gay garden
And embowering trees, with silent eloquence,
Telling a tale of sweet domestic peace.
He only altered, stood unrecognized
'Mid things familiar,—feeling it most strange,
To rove a stranger, where each thing he saw,
Howe'er minute, was as a golden link,
In memory's chain, which bound his spirit
To the silent past.

Yet, midst his sadness,
'Twas a deep joy to breathe his native air—
'To gaze at that blue heaven, whose radiant arch
Bent in its brightness o'er his childhood's home. —